

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 246838

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEC, PFOR, UR, US (STEPANOV, SERGEY VASILYEVICH)

SUBJECT: SHOOTING OF SOVIET EMBASSY EMPLOYEE

REF: STATE 24060 NOTAL

1. OCTOBER 4 SOVIET EMBASSY FIRST SECRETARY YERESKOV-SKIY DELIVERED TO EUR/SOV DIPLOMATIC NOTE PROTESTING STEPANOV SHOOTING. IN NOTE SOVIET EMBASSY COMMENTED THAT IT HAD RAISED WITH DEPARTMENT MANY TIMES THE PROBLEMS OF WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS FOR EMBASSY STAFF, AND NEVER RECEIVED A SATISFACTORY RESPONSE. NOTE INCLUDES A DEMAND THAT EFFECTIVE MEASURES BE TAKEN TO GUARANTEE SECURE WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS, AND CONCLUDES THAT EMBASSY RESERVES THE RIGHT TO PURSUE THIS QUESTION FURTHER IN THE FUTURE.

2. DEPTOFF REPLIED THAT DEPARTMENT OF COURSE REGRETTED AND DEPLORED THE TRAGIC INCIDENT, AS SOVIET EMBASSY HAD BEEN
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INFORMED AND AS DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN HAD ANNOUNCED AT

OCTOBER 4 NOON PRESS BRIEFING. DEPTOFF NOTED THAT WITNESSES HAD DESCRIBED THE ROBBERY ATTEMPT AND THE ASSAILANTS, AND THE POLICE ARE INVESTIGATING INTENSIVELY IN AN EFFORT TO IDENTIFY AND APPREHEND THE CRIMINALS. DEPTOFF COMMENTED THAT SUCH SIDEWALK ROBBERIES ARE FREQUENT, HOWEVER, AND OFTEN THE GUILTY ARE NEVER CAUGHT.

3. REFERRING TO SOVIET EMBASSY PROTEST NOTE, DEPTOFF NOTED THAT SHOOTING OCCURRED OUTSIDE GROCERY STORE AT 1441 P ST. NW, AND NOT AT ANY SOVIET ESTABLISHMENT. DEPTOFF SAID THAT VIOLENT CRIME IS FACT OF LIFE IN DOWNTOWN WASHINGTON, AND STORE IS LOCATED IN HIGH-RISK AREA. DEPARTMENT HAS TAKEN AND CONTINUES TO TAKE MEASURES TO PROTECT SOVIET ESTABLISHMENTS IN WASHINGTON, BUT WHAT SPECIFIC MEASURES DID SOVIET EMBASSY EXPECT DEPARTMENT TO TAKE TO PREVENT INCIDENTS SUCH AS STEPANOV ROBBERY AWAY FROM SOVIET OFFICES OR HOMES? YERESKOVSKIY REPLIED

THAT SOVIET EMBASSY WOULD WAIT AND SEE WHAT DEVELOPED IN STEPANOV'S CONDITION AND POLICE INVESTIGATION, BUT MAY HAVE SPECIFIC REQUESTS IN THE FUTURE. HE SAID SOVIET EMBASSY STAFF IS AWARE OF DANGER OF VIOLENT CRIME IN WASHINGTON, AND RESIDENTS OF LARGE APARTMENT HOUSES SUCH AS 4,000 TUNLAW ROAD NW ARE TAKEN TO GROCERY STORE IN GROUPS BY SOVIET EMBASSY BUS. BECAUSE REGULAR HOUSING AREAS WERE FULL, HOWEVER, STEPANOV AND WIFE WERE LIVING AT 1500 MASS AVE. NW, ONLY ABOUT 200 METERS FROM EMBASSY. YERESKOVSKIY NOTED THAT STORE WAS NEAR STEPANOV'S APARTMENT WHICH IN TURN WAS NEAR EMBASSY, AND SOVIET PER-

SONNEL HAD A RIGHT TO EXPECT TO BE SECURE LIVING NEAR THEIR EMBASSY.

4. DURING CONVERSATION YERESKOVSKIY APPEARED TO ACKNOWLEDGE WITHOUT QUESTION THAT SHOOTING WAS ATTRIBUTABLE TO ORDINARY ROBBERY ATTEMPT AND WAS NOT POLITICALLY MOTIVATED. HE SAID THAT SOVIET EMBASSY PERSONNEL HAD BEEN INJURED IN PAST YEARS IN ROBBERIES IN WASHINGTON, BUT TO HIS KNOWLEDGE STEPANOV CASE WAS BY FAR MOST SERIOUS INJURY. KISSINGER

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